



Artist's tricycle
heads south

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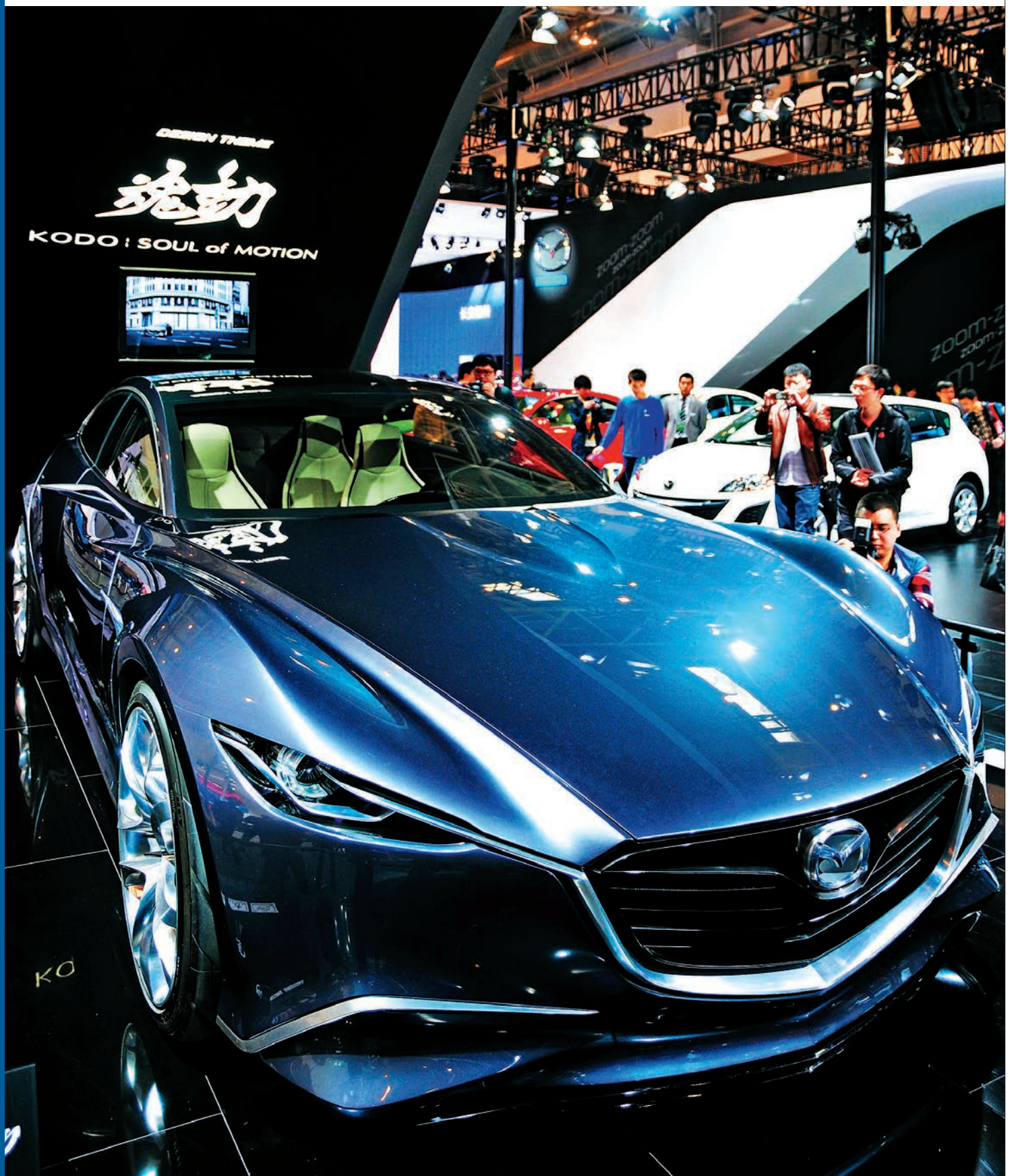
Opera on the
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Carmakers' new hope

With foreign markets continuing their tumble, carmakers are betting on China more than ever – a fact obvious to anyone attending the Beijing International Auto Show. General Motors, Ford and other carmakers have unveiled a flurry of new and revamped models aimed at the China market.

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The thirsty dragon

Capital faces severe water shortage

Rarely in recent memory has water scarcity been as apparent as it was this past winter, which saw 108 dry days before the first snowfall on February 9.

The 12-year drought is making the relatively dry capital even more water-starved.



Beijing is expected to face a water shortage of 1.3 billion cubic meters this year.

Wang Yuyi/CFP Photo

The capital is expected to face a water shortage of 1.3 billion cubic meters this year, accounting for a third of the city's annual water usage, according to local water authorities.

The municipal government will work to keep the capital's water consumption within 3.7 billion cubic meters this year, as only 2.4 billion cubic meters can be supplied by local water resources, Cheng Jing, head of the Beijing Water Authority, said Monday.

Zhang Junfeng, a water conservancy expert, is more worried about the exacerbating conditions.

Zhang has been monitoring Beijing's water condition since 1993. He has conducted weekly field research into rivers reaching into Hebei Province.

The Miyun reservoir is one of the rivers he visited. The reservoir has long been the only source of water for Beijing. But underneath the ripples is water from the nearby Miyun Waste Water Disposable Factory. Its fish can

no longer survive.

Zhang said the reservoir is suffering from a supply shortage. Its current volume of stored water is only 1.13 billion cubic meters – about one fourth of its total storage capacity.

Of that, 400 million cubic meters is considered “dead storage,” leaving only 700 million cubic meters available for use.

“The main problem, for Beijing and the rest of north China, is that we are running out of water. While global warming is the main cause, reckless development and poor planning have made the situation even worse,” Zhang said.

Zhao Yun, a 65-year-old local resident, agreed. He comes every day to net out the dead fish.

He could still recall the days when locals could enjoy the luxury of an occasional flood. “When I was 12 years old, whenever there was a flood, we all rushed to the banks to see the spectacle,” he said. “The river would stretch hundreds of meters, and the

water seemed to meet the skyline.”

Zhang said the city is eagerly awaiting water to be diverted from southern China.

“The water diversion project will bring around 1.3 billion cubic meters of water to Beijing by 2014. It will ease demand,” Zhang said.

But the government must plan ahead without the diverted water. It hopes the gap of 1.3 billion cubic meters can be bridged by a combination of measures, including the use of recycled water, water diversion and moderate exploitation of underground water.

Beijing has been plagued by droughts for 13 consecutive years, with its fast-paced economic development and ever-growing population exacerbating the shortage, said Cheng from the water authority.

Cheng said the government will further tighten water management by setting a ceiling for the city's annual water consumption at 4 billion cubic meters by 2015. **(Agencies)**

Behind the headlines

Golf courses, ski resorts told to ease up on water

By Huang Daohen

The capital has been suffering disastrous droughts, but a blind eye was often turned to water-hungry golf courses due to poor regulation.

But an amended guideline on water conservation is expected to be passed by the end of this month, said He Jianping, a deputy director from the Beijing Water Authority.

Under the new rule, industries like bathhouses, golf courses and ski resorts will be defined as special water-using sectors because of the huge quantity they use.

“They will be given quotas and will have their water fees raised,” He said.

The guideline will also tighten restrictions for industrial users and

reward those who try to conserve water.

Tian Min, a city planning expert at Beijing Normal University, applauded the government's new move.

Tian said the country saw a golf course building frenzy during the 1990s when the sport became a favorite of the elite and nouveau riche.

By 2005, the golf craze was becoming an embarrassment as it exhausted water supplies and ate up the nation's scarce arable land. The government banned the building of new courses.

But maintaining the existing courses is another headache, Tian said.

Statistics show that grass on golf courses can consume as much as half a ton of water per square meter annually. An 18-hole golf course, usu-

ally occupying a total grass area of 300,000 to 400,000 square meters, will use 150,000 to 200,000 tons of water per year.

Other surveys were scarier.

An earlier Xinhua report said that the capital's 38 golf courses consume 20 million tons of water each year – enough to drain the Kunming Lake in the Summer Palace 10 times over.

Tian suggested that using reclaimed water for irrigation may get the golf courses off the hook. However, fewer than 7 percent of capital's 38 golf courses use reclaimed water.

Though reclaimed water is cheaper, costing a quarter of the price of household water, the infrastructure needed to channel it to the golf courses will cost a lot, Tian said.

Brief

New visa policy to attract talent

A new visa category titled “talent introduction” has been added to a draft law on exit and entry as part of the country's efforts to draw talented individuals from abroad.

The draft law was submitted on Tuesday to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC), China's top legislature, for its second reading.

Ordinary visas will be granted to foreigners who enter the country to work, study, visit relatives, travel or conduct business and to those who qualify for the talent introduction category, according to the draft law.

Yin Weimin, minister of human resources and social security, said last month that China will make greater efforts to resolve issues related to overseas talents' visas and residency permits this year.

China will bolster favorable treatment for them with advantageous policies in social insurance, taxation and medical services, and their children's education and academic funding, said the minister.

Beijing topped the latest list of cities attracting foreign talent; it was followed by Shanghai and Tianjin.

The ranking is based on 18 indicators such as living environment, work environment and education environment. Beijing claimed the top spot for 13 of the 18 indicators.

China reads less paper, more on the Web

The average citizen read four books, 100 newspapers and 6.67 magazines last year, according to a survey released Monday.

Only 1.2 percent of those surveyed thought they were well-read, while 50.7 percent said they did not read enough, according to the survey conducted by the Chinese Academy of Press and Publication.

The comprehensive reading rate for people between the ages of 18 and 70 was 77.6 percent, a slight rise of 0.5 percent. This includes books, magazines and digital publications.

However, the survey shows an overall decline in the number of people who read both newspapers and magazines.

Those reading online publications increased by 11.1 percent on figures from 2010, with an average of 47.53 minutes being spent reading on the Internet.

Moreover, 27.6 percent of those surveyed preferred reading on their mobile phones, 4.6 percent higher than last year. They spent an average of 13.53 minutes reading on their phones each day, and paid 20.75 yuan for the service.

The survey showed that people choose to read digital publications because they are easy to acquire. Other reasons include lack of restrictions on time and location, convenience and low prices. **(Agencies)**

Still the Noah's Ark?

Global carmakers woo China despite sales slump

By Huang Daohen

Once a mere sideshow, the Beijing International Auto Show, also known as Auto China, is today a prime destination for the auto industry's CEOs.

It's no wonder: the Chinese market, though young and suffering slow growth, is one of the few bright spots in a sluggish industry landscape.



Visitors crowd around a Cadillac CIEL Concept

Li Wenming/CFP Photo

A rare rain pummeled the capital through its eye-stingingly hazardous air pollution on Tuesday. But it wasn't enough to stop Beijingers from flocking to the top event in the world's biggest car market.

Shunyi County, where the show takes place, resembled Detroit during its peak.

Its streets were decorated with auto art and huge billboards advertised top brands like Volkswagen, BMW and Mercedes. The residents headed to the show displayed an energy and optimism that would be sorely out of place in the modern Motor City.

Zhang Hong, a 31-year-old IT engineer, was there Tuesday afternoon to see his favorite Volkswagen Passat CC.

When Zhang got his driver's license in late 2010, it was a difficult time to buy a foreign car in the capital. "I went to all of Volkswagen's 4S stores in the city but could not find one," he said.

But that shortage had little to do with market forces.

A year ago, the municipal government adopted a new policy to cap how many license plates it issued. Under the new rule, customers must apply for a plate through a lottery system: the odds against winning a plate are 30 to 1.

The clampdown, together with tightened lending and investment restrictions, caused car sales growth to crash last year after China emerged as the world's top car market in 2009.

In 2010, the explosive sales growth hit a record-

high 35 percent, but fell to just 2 percent in the first quarter in 2011.

Beijing sold roughly 350,000 vehicles last year, a sharp 53 percent decline from a year earlier.

Nonetheless, CEOs of global carmakers remain confident about steady growth in the country.

"I don't think this is a long-term trend," said Kevin Wale, president of General Motors China. "You should never underestimate the world's biggest car market with a population of 1.3 billion."

General Motors unveiled many new vehicles designed for the Chinese market, including two new Buicks, a midsize Malibu and two luxury Cadillacs slated for release later this year.

Wale's optimism is shared by Dieter Zetsche, chairman of Daimler AG and head of Mercedes-Benz Cars.

"This big country merits big ambitions," Zetsche said in an earlier interview. He said the country's car market would double by 2020.

"We will continue to build our manufacturing presence and will double our production capacity here by 2015," he said.

Ford introduced a scaled-down new SUV with a 1-liter engine Monday. "This new SUV is specially designed for growth markets like China," said Kumai Galhotra, Ford's vice president of product development for the Asia-Pacific region.

"To be successful in China, we must tailor [our products]

to the specific tastes of Chinese customers," he said.

The new SUV is due to be manufactured at Ford's factory in Chongqing, a step experts said showed the carmaker's intention to tap inland markets where car ownership remains relatively low.

Volkswagen has also announced plans to open a factory in the region of Xinjiang.

Similarly, other multinational carmakers, including GM, Honda, Peugeot, Toyota and Nissan, are targeting the low-end sector, focusing on cars priced at 50,000 yuan.

Wen Yijun, an industrial analyst at Oriental Securities, said the extension of foreign brands into the low-end market may threaten domestic carmakers.

"The signs of a tougher market are clear as there are more brands and more products in China than ever before," Wen said.

Geely's Li Shufu agreed, noting the importance of original technology.

"We are not merely staying in a low end of the market. We are trying to create new technologies and improve our quality," he said.

His Geely acquired Sweden's Volvo in 2010.

Geely unveiled a four-wheel-drive compact and its rival Chery introduced two new vehicles, including a compact SUV.

"Though global brands still dominate the domestic market, local carmakers are trying to shift the balance," Wen said.



Winning China

Know the consumer

Business is a struggle when an overseas company comes to China and expects its foreign business model to "just work."

Knowing your consumers and tailoring your products to them is how to win the China market, said Erin Yao, research director at local consulting firm Qingxue.

Like many car buyers abroad, Chinese consumers consider price, safety and appearance as the three most important factors when shopping for a new car. But the order in which these are considered vary wildly by age.

The majority of buyers – those younger than 30 – emphasized appearance and performance. Older buyers focused on safety, comfort and delivery time.

Yao said young buyers are more eager to purchase status. "A good-looking and personalized car will earn you much face," she said.

For riding comfort, Yao said Chinese consumers have a different view from buyers in foreign markets. They emphasize interior decoration and ride comfort, as most Chinese families only have one car and use it to pick up others.

In developed countries, where it is common for households to have two or more cars, ride comfort is less emphasized.

Another difference is that Chinese consumers rarely buy a secondhand car, Yao said.

"It is a matter of face. Besides, the secondhand car market is poorly developed."

Analysis

A Noah's Ark for global auto market?

Though the country saw a slowdown in the car sales growth last year, it is one of the few things keeping global automakers afloat, said Wen Yijun, an industrial analyst with Oriental Securities.

"It's one of few major auto markets that are growing during this global economic downturn," he said.

The latest statistics from the China Passenger Car Association show that from January to March this year, the country only saw sales growth of 0.3 percent from a year earlier.

But the slight growth translates into sales of 3.53 million cars, Wen said. He predicted that this year the country's auto market would increase by 7 percent

to 19.8 million units.

The figure is promising enough for carmakers to think of China not as an emerging market, but as the industry's central battleground, Wen said.

One sign is that while many companies shunned auto shows in North America and Europe, they are doing their best at the ongoing Auto China, with about 120 car premiers.

However, Wen said this does not necessarily mean China has become the main market for the auto industry.

Domestic carmakers are still struggling to compete with foreign brands because of their limited technology and manufacturing capability, he said.

Tricycle travels from Beijing to Shanghai



Faye (left) and his M2B project partner

By Han Manman

A colorful sculpture of spheres, pyramids and cubes rotate like subatomic particles interacting with each other when the French visual artist Niko de La Faye's three-wheeled cart moves. The scene represents the way a city can break the monotony of the urban landscape and surprise us.

The mobile kinetic sculpture called M2B is currently traveling from Beijing to Shanghai under Faye's "Beijing-Shanghai M2B Project: a 1500km Art performance."

The term M2B means "from MUKS to BEKS" – a Mobile Urban Kinetic Sculpture (MUKS) that mutates into a Butterfly Effect Kinetic Sculpture (BEKS).

Faye has been working on the M2B project in Beijing since the beginning of last year, having been inspired by old Chinese tricycles.

Faye found that the tricycle has been around for decades. It is a commercial platform that has been used along the years in many different ways, from basic delivery vehicle to itinerant restaurant or ambulant shop.

So, he made his M2B with an old tricycle and a 1.4-meter cubic stainless steel structure.

Faye's creative three-wheel artwork is also based on the yin-yang, featuring a perfect balance between shapes. Eight black and white balls are set on the corners of the cubic structure. Each ball represents a trigram from Taoist cosmology.

Trigrams consist of three lines representing yin and yang symbols. Each one has a specific structure that determines its location in space and its particular meaning. They are often presented in a hexagonal shape.

Faye said Taoists believe that the eight trigrams are a map of the cosmos. The entire metal structure is a representation of the universe.



Faye and his tricycle cart

Photos provided by Niko de La Faye



Faye's artwork always draws public attention when he is on the road.

Three axels are also placed inside the cube, linked together by belts and connected to the back-wheel axel by another belt. When the bike is moving it animates the whole system. The three axels move simultaneously, each one at a different speed.

Faye said the M2B project involves two steps. MUKS is the first step. MUKS is made of a traditional three-wheel Chinese bike and a massive metal kinetic structure that is fitted to the back of the bike. The two elements, bicycle and the added structure, are combined together into one single

mechanism. The whole mechanism is operated by the person who pedals.

The multi-directional movement combined with the colored shapes gives this sculpture a fascinating aspect. It can be seen as a simple "particles mover," a vehicle that would materialize the move-

ment of elements in space.

"While MUKS is moving, the shapes inside the structure are constantly revolving, making new patterns," Faye said. "The generated patterns can be seen as 'propositions' to explain interactions between particles in the universe, referring to the theoretical-physicist Antony Garrett Lisi and his 'Exceptionally Simple Theory of Everything.'"

BEKS is the second step of the M2B Project. The transformation from MUKS to BEKS will happen as soon as a person decides to acquire the piece and to offer it a formal space where it will live the second part of its life.

"In this fast-changing society and continuously evolving environment, my M2B project celebrates poetry and green transportation in a slow-moving process," Faye said.

Faye began his Beijing adventure on Tuesday and will ride the M2B for five weeks before hopefully arriving in Shanghai. The whole trip will be photo and video documented. Images and news will be uploaded to Facebook and Sina Weibo each day.

French family travels across Asia by converted bus



The French couple's ride into China.

By Liu Xiaochen

Nicolas and Isabelle Rendu, a French couple, rode into China with their four children in an RV-like vehicle on March 12. By April 17, the family was in Urumqi preparing to continue their trip across Asia.

Their China route from Yunnan to Xinjiang via Sichuan, Shanxi and Gansu provinces has captured the public's attention. Their guide and translator, Yang Chi, arrived in Yunnan two days before them.

Last July, this couple decided to quit their jobs at a law firm and take a trip with their children. The oldest of their children is 10, and the youngest is 2.

They bought a Renault bus and reconfigured it for about 80,000 yuan, then shipped it to the Philippines. After flying there from Paris, their trip was underway.

Their trip will continue into Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Iran and Turkey.

Nicolas said there were two reasons for their trip. The first is to give their kids the experience of traveling abroad and seeing how people in faraway places live. The other is to strengthen family bonds.

They decided to travel by bus so that their children would feel more comfortable. They also wanted to be different from other travelers.

The family has attracted a lot of attention, as people often stop to take photos. Inside the vehicle are beds, tables, a small kitchen and even wireless Internet.

Not all has been smooth riding, however. Their vehicle has already broken down six times.

The worst breakdown happened in Mianning, Sichuan Province, where the family was stranded for 16 days.

"We went to repair it almost every day," Yang said.

After the vehicle broke down again in Urumqi, the Rendus appealed to a radio



The children still read to do homework on the road.

CFP Photos

station for help. Several people called in to tell them where repair factories were located.

For the family, the vehicle has become their home.

"No matter how bad the situation is, this sedan can fit the whole family," Yang said. "They just want to take care of their home and never

abandon it."

The Rendus are very interested in Chinese culture. They bought a lot of goods, including clothes and hats, and have seen the Great Wall and pandas.

"China is a very big country," Nicolas said. "And it is also a rich country with culture and good food. The

people in different cities are very different from each other."

He said he regretted not stopping in Beijing.

After they return to France, Nicolas and Isabelle will find new jobs and home-school their children until they're ready to go back to school.

Rotaract volunteers play ball with mentally disabled

By Wu Hao

Last Saturday, volunteers from Rotaract – a NGO that promotes community service – spent a day playing field sports with mentally disabled students from several schools in Beijing.

The weather forecast called for rain, but that didn't deter anyone. Michael Walker, organizer of the event, sent everyone an email saying, "I know that Rotaract's call to community service is not shaken by a measly few drops of rain! Our expectations for the event are that everybody invited will show up so we need you all there; rain, snow, or shine."

Volunteers of Rotaract and other organizations – including a pregnant woman and an 11-year-old girl – assembled at noon to make preparations. Their hard work was rewarded in the end, and it never did rain.

Emphasize on teamwork

Rotaract also provided T-shirts with sponsors' logos and prizes purchased using the money they raised.

The participants, all dressed in a white T-shirt with logos, were accompanied by their parents or teachers. They were divided into six groups: each was allocated several volunteers.

The events included group competitions like carrying ping-pong balls with badminton rackets, 100-meter races and basketball dribbling.

Volunteers offered encouragement throughout the day. There was also music in the background, and lots of whooping.

Hou Lili, one of the event organizers, has been working at Beijing Huiling School – a community service for people with learning disabilities – for the last five years.

Hou held a loudspeaker during the day and scrambled to keep things running smoothly. He didn't rest until the very end.

He said the aim of the event was to nurture team spirit.

"We've been cooperating with Rotaract for three or four years. They've continuously supported us with funding and volunteers," Hou said. This year's field day was the third time it's been held, and the second time with Rotaract.

"Although there's a language barrier that caused a bit of confusion today, those foreign volunteers are quite



Volunteers from Rotaract spend a day playing field sports with mentally disabled students in Beijing. Photos by Wu Hao



Volunteers actively cheer people on.



Ping-pong-ball-carrying competition

active, and that cheers people up," Hou said.

Rotaract's future president, Ian Curtiss, acknowledged miscommunications between his side and Huiling, but he said, "The main goal of the event was for Rotaract to help assist and support Huiling with its event in support of developmentally disabled stu-

dents in Beijing, which is exactly what we did."

Liu Jiaqi was the only volunteer from the Chinese mainland last Saturday; she learned about Rotaract when she was in Singapore as an exchange student. This was her first time participating in a Rotaract event in Beijing.

"I had never communicated

with mentally disabled people before. They are quite open and just like ordinary people," she said.

A commitment to community service

Founded in 1905 by Paul P. Harris, Rotary is a worldwide organization of business and professional leaders that provides humanitarian services.

The name "Rotary" was derived from the early practice of rotating meetings among members' offices. Rotary Clubs meet every week to plan their community service projects that address today's most critical issues, such as education, poverty alleviation and environmental protection.

Rotaract is Rotary's youth program; it's registered under Rotary, its parent NGO. It hopes that participants can discover more about themselves and the world by participating in community projects and learning about the principles of ethics and service.

"It's nice that we can use our skills and our connections with other international NGOs to help our local communities," said Michael Walker, field day organizer.

Walker joined Rotaract three months ago.

"Basically, we like to empower our volunteers to get more involved, so we encouraged Mike Walker to run this project to get more involved," said Richard Bethune, Rotaract's public relations manager who has been with the organization for three years.

"We try to create leadership opportunities for all of our volunteers. [Walker] is new, but he is running the event with Huiling."

Rotaract holds other events as well, such as speed dating, food events and clothes drives, all aimed at raising money for charities.

Last fall, Rotaract raised 5,000 yuan for Huiling by selling paintings.

The organization doesn't keep the money it raises. Instead, it sustains itself by charging 100 yuan for people to become members.

"Official members can elect and vote in activities and help make decisions for the club," said Curtiss, the club's future president. Rotary awarded him a scholarship to study at Peking University.

Rotaract also invites speakers to share ideas and experiences in charities in China.

As for the future, Curtiss said he wants to continue building the group's existing relationships with local orphanages and find new challenges for their members.

"In the big scheme of things, I hope to expand the contact and cooperation between our Beijing Rotaract club and some of the other 8,000-plus Rotaract clubs throughout the world," he said. "Of course we can't work with all of them all at once, but if we start small, we'll slowly increase the international cooperation that Rotary and Rotaract is all about."

Build a rock-climbing wall at home

By Annie Wei

No sport can hone a perfect, beautiful body quite like rock climbing. There are several places to go rock climbing, but a recent trend has been to build rock climbing walls on terraces or in loft apartments.

The estimated cost of a 10-square-meter wall with

basic equipment such as hooks and safety blanket is 20,000 yuan. Most companies charge 1,500 yuan per square meter.

Here are a few companies that provide rock-climbing wall installation services.

Alexander Rock

Climbing Equipment

Where: Floor 25, Building

4, Aoyun Meiti Cun, Chaoyang District

Tel: 6481 2448

Website: alsd.com.cn

Beijing SS Sport

Where: B1-5, Building 13, Yongtai Xindibiao Plaza, Qinghe, Haidian District

Tel: 5166 3305

Website: ssyd2008.com



A climbing wall makes exercising at home easy. CFP Photo

Other places for rock-climbing

Touchstore

Ritan Park used to be the only place in town with a rock-climbing wall. Now that it has some competition, it has expanded its wall and added more climbing routes.

The park provides all necessary equipment. It's very busy on weekends, but the staff is always friendly and helpful.

Where: 6 Ritan Bei Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Daily, 10 am - 9:30 pm

Cost: 25 yuan for one climb

or 50 yuan for a day of unlimited climbing; 1,500 yuan for a year's membership

Tel: 8561 6301

Baihe Natural

Rock Climbing Cliff

The Baihe River Valley is ideal for climbing. It has different cliffs to satisfy climbers of any skill level.

Take a long-distance bus from Dongzhimen to Miyun (10 yuan) and then take a minibus (30 to 40 yuan) to Dashitou. If you drive there, take National Road 111 to the

Tanghe Exit. Head toward to the Baihebao Reservoir. You can take the Jingchang Highway back to the city.

Shijingshan

Amusement Park

This place is cheap: only 20 yuan per person.

Getting there: Take subway Line 1 to Bajiao Amusement Park station. Or drive along West Fifth Ring Road and take the Jingyuan Lu exit. Drive west another 100 meters until you see the amusement park.

Tel: 6886 2547

260 films screened at the Second Beijing International Film Festival



Until tomorrow, Beijing will host its second international film festival. The audience can enjoy 260 local and foreign films at 30 big cinemas around the city. There are many lectures and events where movie fans can meet their favorite stars and directors.

Photo by Chen Xi/CFP

ASK Beijing Today

Email your questions to: weiyang@ynet.com

Is it possible to buy an apartment in Beijing as an expat? I heard there were many different rules, and I am really confused.

If you are a foreigner and have lived in Beijing for a year with all necessary documents, including work visa and proof of income and tax payments, you can buy an apartment with 70 years of property rights.

Those who are unable to produce the required documents can only buy commercial buildings, which have only 40 years of property rights, a 50 percent down payment and a 10-year mortgage. It's better to consult your real estate agent if you are buying a secondhand apartment. For new apartments, just ask for more details from the sales manager.

Where can I get safer milk delivered?

You can find Wonder Milk or Green Yard in supermarkets like

April Gourmet or Jenny Lou's. These milk companies also provide delivery service in Beijing, though with a minimum order requirement (Green Yard's is 112 yuan per week).

I want to buy a Kindle on Taobao, but I'm not sure if they are real or fake.

Electronic or digital equipment on Taobao is usually OK to purchase. In China, online vendors charge less compared to stores because they do not pay rent or tax. But it's still good to check the seller's credit score and

have a look at other buyers' reviews about the product.

I signed a five-year contract for a small bungalow in Caochangdi. I need reliable carpenters and handymen. Do you know where I can find them?

There are many artists' studios in Caochangdi, so it's better to talk to your neighbors and ask for recommendations. It's difficult to tell if workers from websites like 58.com or ganji.com can be trusted.

(By Wei Ying)

Spanish exhibition hopes

By Zhao Hongyi

Connecting great art – especially photography – with its target market is often a challenge for artists. This week, the new exhibition Capturing ARCOMadrid at the Institute Cervantes Beijing is giving local photographers new ideas about how to succeed.

Curated by ARTIUM, the Basque Center for Contemporary Art in Vitoria-Gasteiz, the exhibition includes works by 61 Spanish photographers, such as Cristina Garcia Rodero, Alberto Garcia Alix, Joan Fontcuberta and Ouka Leele.

Their works explore life situations and understandings about life and art and provide a snapshot of Spanish contemporary photography.

Founded in the early 1980s, ARCOMadrid is known as one of most important art exhibitions on the European continent with its influence extending into Latin America.

But it was only in 1988 that the exhibition acquired its current links to photography.

That was the year ARTIUM asked ARCOMadrid's organizers to invite photographers to the annual exhibition in commemoration of 150 years since the birth of photography.

The project was so successful that photographers have been invited back to ARCOMadrid each year since. Thus far, ARTIUM has invited 87 international photographers and archived more than 400 of their photographs.

Their work, collected in *Capturing ARCOMadrid: 25 Years of Photography in Spain*, shows visitors' reactions to the exhibition and the artists behind each piece.

"Photography was recognized early on as a strong art form because it records moments in time from the photographer's unique viewpoint," said Enrique Martinez, curator of the exhibition in Beijing.

"The works collected here are of high quality and worth saving because each reflects the relationship between people and art."

The idea for the new exhibition came after a visit by ARCOMadrid Director Carlos Urroz in 2011, during which he spoke with Chinese gallery organizers about promoting art and preserving the country's heritage.

Urroz and several local galleries agreed to hold art exchanges to spread recognition of each country's artists and their works. Capturing ARCOMadrid is the first exhibition to come out of their agreement.

To better link Spanish art and artists with Chinese collectors and visitors, ARCOMadrid invited Fa Man, director of both the finance magazine *Caijing* and photography magazine *LENS*, to photograph the 2012 ARCOMadrid in February.

Fa contributed eight pictures to the exhibition, showing his understanding of ARCOMadrid and its visitors.

"Fa's works offer a new viewpoint from the Far East and give us a fresh look at a three-decade-old topic," Martinez said.

"He is more concerned with humanity and the emotions of the visitors. Our previous photographs were more concerned with individuals' reactions to history, technology and circumstances."

"We hope to shorten the distance between our collections and potential Chinese visitors," said Inma Gonzales, director of the Institute Cervantes Beijing.

Fa said he was surprised that the prices of



Enrique Martinez (mid) and Fa Man (right) at the opening ceremony

most pieces at ARCOMadrid were quite reasonable, and said he saw quite a number of cutting-edge artists.

"The visit impressed me and reminded me that new elements are essential if you want to make art that sells well," he said.

"China has become one of the greatest art-collecting countries in the world, and that's worth exploring," Inma Gonzales said.

The exhibition at Institute Cervantes Beijing is also participating in this month's Art Beijing.

To further promote the photography collection, Institute Cervantes participated in Caochangdi PhotoSpring 2012-Arles in Beijing from April 21 to 24, together with the Embassy of Spain, ARTIUM and ARCOMadrid.

The festival was organized by several Chinese photographers, the French Cultural Center and Embassy of France to explore new themes for the photographers and to help them market their works.

During the last two years, Caochangdi PhotoSpring has held more than 70 exhibitions and attracted 65,000 visitors. The festival is a meeting place for photographers, collectors, experts and the general public.

Enrique Martinez spoke at a symposium on public cultural policies at the Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA) on April 24 to promote the collections he brought to Beijing on behalf of Spain.

The symposium was part of the EU-China Year of Intercultural Dialogue. It focused on the communication of different cultures and dialogues between European countries and China.

Experts in fine arts from Denmark, France and China spoke about art, culture and marketing, and how these have been influenced by widespread financial turmoil.

Capturing ARCOMadrid: 25 years of photography in Spain

Where: Institute Cervantes Beijing, A1 Gongtitan Lu, Chaoyang District

When: April 24 – June 30

Cost: Free

Tel: 5879 9666

Art Beijing

Where: Agricultural Exhibition Center, 16 Dongsanhuan Bei Lu, Chaoyang District

When: April 29 – May 2

Cost: Free

Tel: 6554 7002, 6554 7003

Caochangdi PhotoSpring

Where: Three Shadows Photography Art Center, 155A Caochangdi, Chaoyang District

When: April 21–24

Cost: Free

Tel: 6432 2663



Curators, by Pierre Gonnord



All their faults, by Aitor Sarabia

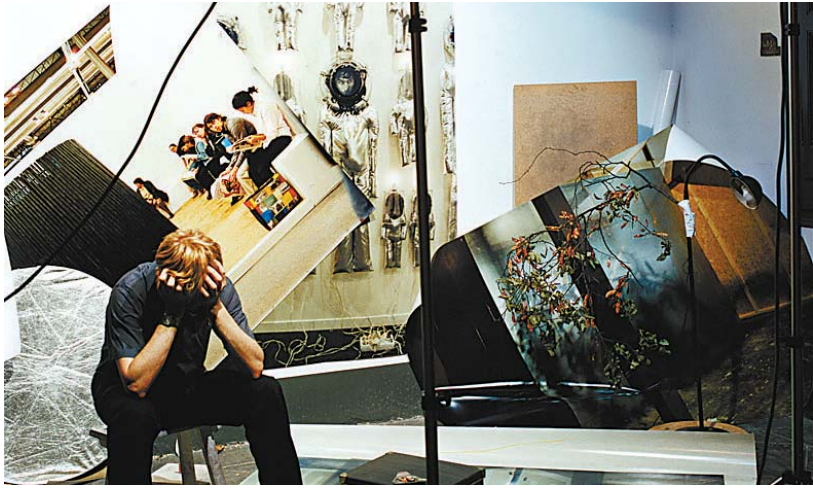


Untitled, by Gonzalo Puch

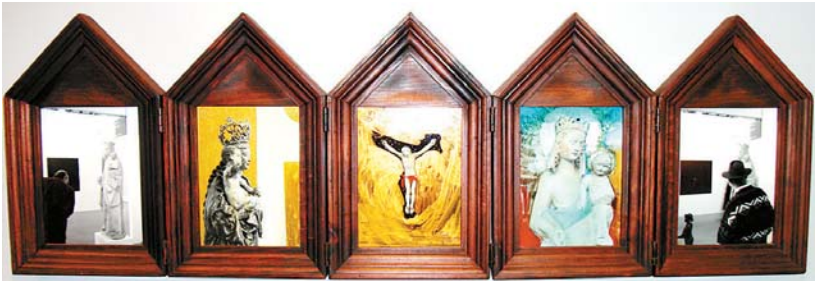


Itziar and Ana Laura, by Ana Laura Alaez

to inspire photographers



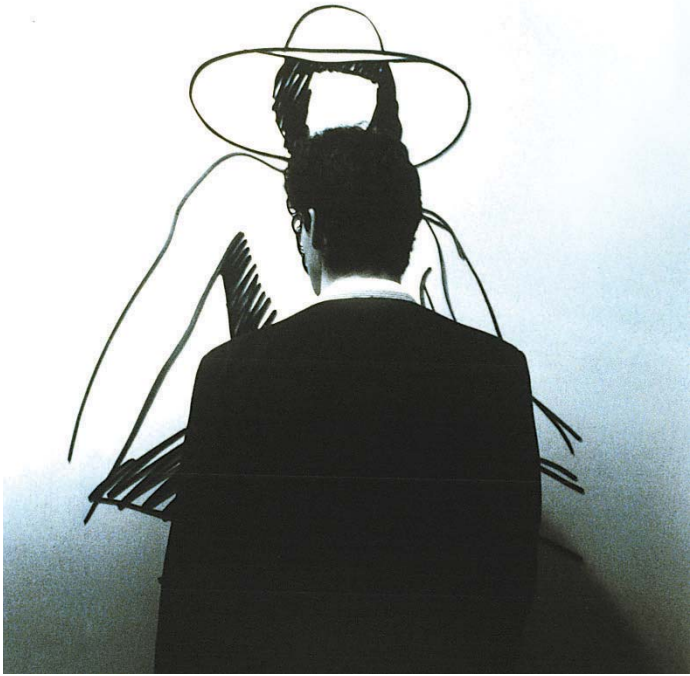
Untitled, by Carles Congost



Untitled, by Ouka Lele



Untitled, Tony Cantany



Untitled, by Joan Fontcuberta



Untitled, by Urraco



Exciting Introduction, by Fa Man

Photos provided by Institute Cervantes

Landscapes in the mist



A Swan

By Tonia Cheung

While most people value photographs that are vivid and sharp, Lu Yanpeng's work is the exact opposite.

Lu's landscape photos are deliberately blurry and misty. In his pictures, the world is masked by thick fog.

His latest exhibition of such works was titled "Landscapes Prohibited to Approach."

"I love the name, which was selected by curator Christine Cayol. She endowed my art with life and humanity," Lu said.

Twenty of the young artist's award-winning works were selected for exhibition during the Pingyao International Photography Festival at Yishu 8 Gallery last Wednesday.

Lu, born in Fujian Province in 1984, has been called "impressive and rare for his age."

All his works feature mountains, trees, birds and buildings with traces of Lu's fingerprints. He touches each piece of film during printing. Instead of detracting from the pictures, the prints create a blur, like mist in the mountains.

There are works depicting the Sanqing Mountain in Jiangxi Province and buildings in Beijing. All the landscapes convey a mood like that of ancient poetry.

"He is more like a poet, infusing each work with the essence of Chinese verse," Cayol said.

One of his most notable works at the exhibition hall depicted Tian'anmen.

"When my eyes focused on it (Tian'anmen), I could feel a huge emptiness in the heavy mist. At that moment, I saw the entire Forbidden City behind Tian'anmen in the

mist," Cayol said.

"His works create a distance between the audience and the landscape. It does not block people from seeing anything, but it creates space for discovery. What you can see does not depend on your eyes, but your heart."

Other pieces exhibited depicted the walls of several local temples and birds in the Beijing Zoo.

Lu came to Beijing in 2005, after graduating from college in Fujian Province.

"I've been quite busy seeing different people and preparing for various exhibitions the last few months. I have to quiet down for some time so I can continue my work," he said.

Lu said Beijing is so bustling with activity that he has a hard time finding peace in the city. He plans to return to his hometown for several months following the exhibition.

"I'm not sure whether I will continue this style of photography, but I do want to keep adding an element of myself to each piece, just like my fingerprint," he said. He said he plans to turn his attention to moving water for his next exhibition.

Lu's last exhibition was two years ago, when he displayed his photos together with his wife's paintings.

Landscapes Prohibited to Approach

Where: Former Sino-French University, Jia 20, Dongguangchenggen Bei Jie, Dongcheng District

When: Until May 15, daily except Sunday, 10 am - 6:30 pm

Admission: Free

Tel: 6581 9058



A Bird



Trees Under the Light



Tian'anmen



A Mountain

Photos provided by Yishu 8 Gallery

“ In 3D...You can be standing next to Cio-Cio San (Madam Butterfly) on the stage, seeing her devotion and feeling her pain. ”

3D film brings opera off the stage



Julian Napier, the director

By Annie Wei

For people living outside Beijing and Shanghai, TV may be the only place one can hear western opera.

But a new screening of *Madam Butterfly 3D* is expected to help more opera fans across the country access the art.

Last year, production company RealD and London's Royal Opera House teamed up to produce *Madam Butterfly 3D*.

Puccini's *Madam Butterfly*, one of the most famous operas in history, tells the story of a Japanese geisha's unwavering love for an American naval officer – and of his thoughtless toying with her devotion that serves as the catalyst of tragedy.

The latest re-telling of the opera was filmed live and will be shown in the industry's brightest 3D projection.

By wearing 3D glasses, viewers can enjoy a crisp, clear and immersing experience: one Julian Napier, the director, hopes will leave viewers feeling like they got the best seats in the house.

“In 3D, you not only have the best seats in the opera house, but you can move around. You can be standing next to Cio-Cio San (Madam Butterfly) on the stage, seeing her devotion and feeling her pain,” Napier said.

Most 3D movies are action or fantasy films like *Avatar*, *Hugo*, *John Carter* and *Avengers*, but Napier says dramas are where filmmakers should really be exploring the use of 3D.

He said that 3D dramas can give the audience a different viewing experience than any other genre – provided of course that the performance of the actors and the technology are up to snuff.

“I believe this will be the next sensation in 3D,” he said, explaining how powerful visuals can make viewers



World-famous soprano Zhang Liping (left) plays the role of the ill-fated Cio-Cio-San (Butterfly) and James Valenti plays the dashing Pinkerton



Photos provided by Rebecca Chen

become more involved in the story.

Napier became involved in theater at a young age and spent his teens working on the sets of productions such as *Cats*, *Starlight Express*, *Les Miserables* and *Miss Saigon*. When he was in Los Angeles, he worked on-set as a production assistant for Steven Spielberg on the film *Hook*.

After he returned to the UK, Napier began to write and direct shorts films. He started to direct 3D films in 2003, and has been devoted to the technology ever since.

In 2010, he directed *Carmen 3D* – another collaboration between RealD and the Royal Opera House – which was released at 1,500 cinemas worldwide last year.

Many processes can affect the brightness of a film recorded in stereoscopic 3D, Napier said.

“The filmmaker has to be careful choosing the technical support in every aspect, otherwise the end result will look very different from his or her original vision,” he said.

The RealD technology favored by Napier was also used in *Titanic 3D* and advocated by James Cameron at the film's premiere.

“It ensures that any screening would offer justice to our final vision,” Napier said.

Madam Butterfly 3D features a talented cast, including stage directors Moshe Leiser and Patrice Caurier, world-famous soprano Zhang Liping singing the role of the ill-fated Cio-Cio-San (Butterfly) and James Valenti as the dashing Pinkerton who breaks Cio-Cio-San's heart.

The film will be screened at the Jinbao Palace Cinema, Shijingshan Wanda International Cineplex, Oriental Plaza Broadway Cinema and Sagacinema. Call the nearest cinema for a detailed screening schedule.

For Mother's Day!

By Annie Wei

With Mother's Day only two weeks away, *Beijing Today* would like to help you pick the best gifts for Mom, the most important woman of every person's life.

Tableware

Table and kitchenware – from sharp knives to thick bronze cookers and nice bowls and plates – are always a nice practical gift.

Try the hotel utility market in southeast Beijing. It's a wholesale and retail market with hundreds of vendors looking to make a deal. The most common items are white ceramic plates starting from 10 yuan. You can find a variety of wine glasses and coolers as well. A steel wine cooler starts at 70 yuan, and imported wine glasses start from 30 yuan.

There are also lots of sets for baking starting from 40 yuan. You can also find imported home decor pieces too, from candleholders to sofas.

Jingkai Wanjia International Hotel Utility Market

Where: 1 Shangyejie, Lujiaying, Shibaidian, Chaoyang District

Open: 9 am – 5 pm



Versace porcelain

CFP Photo

Jewelry design inspired by mother-and-child



Designed by Yael Sonia

A nice piece of jewelry is always a good place to start.

We like pieces from Yael Sonia, a Brazilian designer whose inspiration is from unlikely sources: toys, specifically the excited look of a child when presented with toys. Her designs include rolling balls, clock pendants and spinning wheels. Her pieces are delicately made, then mixed and matched with jade and pearls. They are not cheap, with prices starting at 10,000 yuan.

Tasaki has also released its design for Mother's Day – the Tasaki Charm. The piece was inspired by a Japanese custom: many years ago, a queen gave birth to a baby on a stone during a war in which the king barely escaped after losing a battle. Ever since, families in that village have made cookies or pastry desserts and placed them on that stone after giving birth. Families would also pray on the stone for the safety of the mom and baby. The jewelry comes in twelve different color jades in candy shape.

Buy from: yaelsonia.com or tasaki.com.cn



Designed by Yael Sonia



The Tasaki Charm series

Photos provided by CFP/Tasaki

Coffee and friends at O'Henry Project



Yunnan coffee brands are available at O'Henry Project.

By Zhang Xiaoran

It might be unusual for coffee shops and cafes to be called "projects," but Henry Yin, co-owner of the recently opened O'Henry Project, sees his cafe as a platform for cultural exchange.

Located on the second floor of the China View building, above Gung Ho! Pizza, the O'Henry Project is currently in its soft opening. Yin is proud of his Middle Eastern menu, especially of his hummus. As a vegetarian, he is also constantly experimenting with dishes to find

exciting combinations of ingredients.

Yin's coffee beans are from a farm in Yunnan Province. His tea is a Sri Lankan brand. He also serves classic cocktails – we recommend the fresh basil Mojito and fruity fizz, both great summer drinks.

Yin, 24, has traveled extensively. He studied Arabic in college, took his first job in North Africa, then quit after six months so he could travel. He went to the Middle East and fell in love with Beirut, the capital of Lebanon. His experience in exploring bars, cafes and nightclubs there was the inspiration for the O'Henry Project.

The cafe is not big – only 45 square meters with an attic above the kitchen serving as a small library, and a patio (which will be used as Couch Surfing's weekly meeting spot on Wednesdays) – but Yin has big plans. He wants to do movie nights on Thursdays and book club meetings on weekends, all part of his greater vision for his cafe.

O'Henry Project

Where: Room 2-201, China View Building, intersection of Gongren Tiyyuchang Dong and Bei Lu, Chaoyang District

Open: 11 am – midnight

Cost: Cocktails 36 yuan, sheesha 46 yuan, beers from 10-40 yuan; Happy Hour all day before 8 pm. Remember that when you visit, you can donate food and drink recipes and books and become a friend of the O'Henry Project.



O'Henry Project aims to be a place for cultural exchange.

Photos provided by O'Henry Project

Almond pudding, 20 yuan

Best almond pudding in Beijing



By Guo Yao

First opened in Nanluogu Xiang in 2006, Alba – a Spanish word that refers to lovers' parting in the morning – is still going strong despite its new location and low profile.

Its almond pudding (20 yuan), served in a blue and white porcelain bowl, might be the best in Beijing. Sweet and tender, the full-bodied almond flavor is comforting. There is a grain of Chinese wolfberry on the top of each serving, making it look like a piece of art.

Another highly recommended dessert is vanilla ice cream with balsamic vinegar (25 yuan). Ice cream and vinegar may seem like a strange combination, but Alba does it well.

If you are a vegetarian, the 12-inch vegetarian pizza (58 yuan) is a must-order, with onions, bell peppers, mushrooms, black olives and Spanish mozzarella cheese. Bolognese is also welcomed among customers, ranging from 49 to 68 yuan.

This cozy venue is nicely decorated with vintage furniture, which reflects the good taste of its owner, Fu Rui. A gazebo upstairs is available for customers who want to enjoy the warm weather.

Alba

Where: 70 Gulou Dong Dajie, Dongcheng District

Open: 8:30 am – 11:00 pm

Tel: 6407 3730



Inside Alba

Photos by Guo Yao



Dining



Seasonal specialties at Yao Chi Cantonese Cuisine of Grand Millennium Beijing

Celebrate the season at Yao Chi with special vegetable and fruit dishes. Recharge your body with invigorating steamed crab in black bean sauce, stir-fried beef tenderloin with bell peppers, braised conch with kale in abalone sauce and braised mixed meat and mushrooms with fresh mixed vegetables.

If you prefer sweet to savory, indulge in fried sesame prawns in sweet lemon sauce, crispy chicken with honeydew melon, fried rice in a pineapple cup and stir-fried prawns and scallops with mixed fresh fruits.

The special fruit and vegetable promotion is available throughout May and June.

Where: Yao Chi Cantonese Restaurant, Grand Millennium Beijing, 7 Dongsanhuan Zhong Lu, Chaoyang District

When: May 1 – June 30

Tel: 8587 6888 ext. 3013

Strawberry lush

Special strawberry cocktails and carefully selected strawberry sweets make the Strawberry Lush an irresistible joy in the spring.

Where: Hilton Beijing, 1 Dongfang Lu, Dongsanhuan Bei Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until April 30

Cost: Strawberry cocktails 68 yuan per glass; strawberry lush combo 86 yuan per person (15 percent gratuity)



Grand Marnier® “Cooktail” at Aria



Aria has invited Nicolas Boussin to present Beijing's cocktail and dessert lovers with a selection of innovative and unique Grand Marnier “Cooktails.” Dinner menu highlights include Crazy Suzette Cocktail; Nougat Passion Cocktail; Spoon and Soufflé Cocktail; Cactus Joke Cocktail; and Ruby Cubes Cocktail.

Boussin was born near Paris in 1965. His enthusiasm for the culinary arts began during an internship at a well-known pastry shop in Chantilly, France, at the age of 16. In 1983, he passed his pastry-cook exam in record time and took a job at a top-ranking Parisian restaurant, where he honed his talent and showed great promise and potential. He earned a silver medal at his first national contest.

In 2003, Boussin joined the Gastronomy Department at the Société des Produits Marnier Lapostolle and was appointed ambassador of France's best-known liqueur, Grand Marnier. He has since been traveling the world exploring new flavors he can use to create original desserts with Grand Marnier.

Where: Aria Bar, China World Hotel, 1 Jianguomen Wai Dajie, Chaoyang District

When: May 1-31

Tel: 6505 2266 ext. 36

White asparagus season

This chef-recommended four-course dinner set menu selects fresh seasonal white or green asparagus for presentation as culinary art.

Elements is serving a royal treat dinner buffet that pairs asparagus with an array of seafood, meats, fresh salads and alluring desserts.

Where: Elements and One East, Hilton Beijing, 1 Dongfang Lu, Dongsanhuan Bei Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Elements, every Saturday – Thursday in May; One East, every day, May 1-31

Cost: One East, white asparagus four-course dinner set dinner, 428 yuan; wine pairing, from 148 yuan per person. Elements, dinner buffet, 288 yuan (15 percent gratuity)

Tel: One East 5865 5030, Elements, 5865 5020

Email: Oneeast.beijing@hilton.com, alex.jia@hilton.com

(By Zhang Nan)



Rent

3br courtyard in Dongcheng

This newly renovated 300-square-meter courtyard is located in Dongcheng District. It has three bedrooms, a study, a living room and two storage areas. The rooms have floor heating. The bathroom and kitchen are modern.

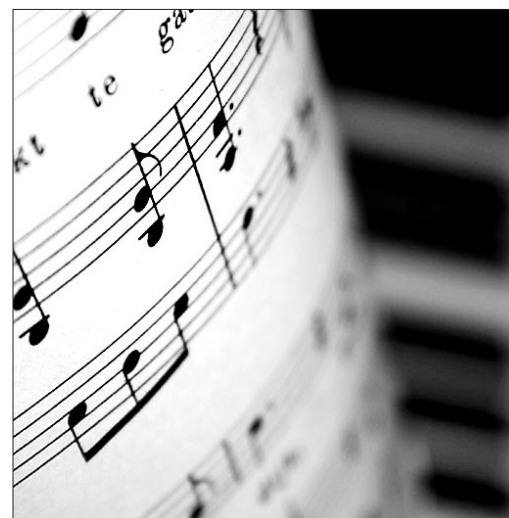
Rent is 28,000 yuan per month. If you want to experience Old Beijing life, consider this courtyard.

Tel: Annie, 6420 0262

Mobile: 182 1089 0200

E-mail: annie@shanghome.net

Workshop



Chinese through song

Chinese is a language where there is always space for improvement, so why not continue your education in a new and exciting way?

Culture Yard's language school is creating a new group class called Chinese Through Songs designed to help all levels of Chinese speakers improve their conversation, pronunciation and listening abilities by learning popular songs.

The songs used in class transcend generations and cover all genres. Music plays a large part in China's culture and history, and having a further understanding of classic and pop songs will allow you to understand China's history through a different voice.

Culture Yard's music expert will teach you the history behind the lyrics, the artist's background, explain the vocabulary and make sure you leave the class with a song memorized to impress your friends at your next karaoke night.

This group class is designed to compliment any current conversational Chinese language study program as it focuses on discovering Chinese culture and expanding one's use of Chinese language. Enriching your studies through a music course will be a tremendous help for those who struggle with tones as it will put your ears to the test and aid in recognition.

A require a knowledge of pinyin is required to follow the written lyrics.

Where: Culture Yard, 10 Shique Hutong, Beixinqiao, Dongcheng District

When: April 29, 6:30-8 pm

Cost: 40 yuan

Tel: 8404 4166, reservations required

Email: contact@cultureyard.net

Fri, Apr. 27



Nightlife

Nova Heart's first EP release party

After an eight-month world tour around the US, Canada, Switzerland, Australia and Hong Kong, the band Nova Heart is arriving in Beijing. Nova Heart's release party of its first EP, *Beautiful Boys*, will be held at Yugong Yishan, organized by Fake Love Music Company.

Where: Yugong Yishan, 3-2 Zhangzizhong Lu, Dongcheng District

When: 9 pm

Admission: 50-80 yuan

Tel: 6404 2711

Brain Failure's unplugged show

The Beijing-based punk band Brain Failure, founded 13 years ago, consists of lead singer Xiao Rong, guitarist Wang Xiaonan, bassist Gao Yufeng and drummer Xu Lin. The band, which has released seven albums, will play at Jianghu Bar.

Where: Jianghu Bar, 7 Dong Mianhua Hutong, Jiaodaokou Nan Jie, Dongcheng District

When: 9 pm

Admission: 50-60 yuan

Tel: 6401 5269



Sat, Apr. 28

Nightlife



Interflow Beijing

Interflow Beijing is a live show held by Rock Motel and Hotpot Music Company, gathering rock bands from Hong Kong, Germany and Beijing. The bands are Killersoap and The Night Ghost Orchestra from Hong Kong, Ignition from Germany, and Twinkle Star and TOOKOO from Beijing.

Where: MAO Live House, 111 Gulou Dong Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: 8:30 pm

Admission: 60-80 yuan

Tel: 6402 5080

Movie

Beijing and London: Screening of silent movie

Provided by the British Film Institute, this screening about a tale of two cities – London and Beijing – marks the film's Chinese debut. The movie is an early-20th-century travelogue with news reports scattered throughout.

Where: UCCA, 798 Art District, Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: 7 pm

Admission: 25 yuan (15 yuan for students, free for members)

Tel: 5780 0200



Music

Midi Music Festival

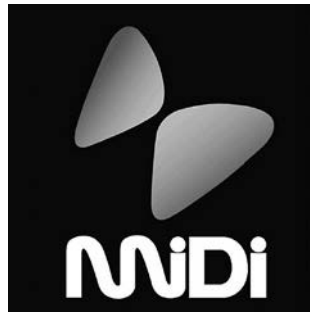
This year's Midi Music Festival theme is "PM2.5," aimed at getting people to pay attention to the environment and human health in general. There will be four stages – Tang, Song, Yuan and Qing. Famous musicians and bands such as Zhang Chu and Miserable Faith will appear on the Tang and Song states. The Qing stage is reserved for new and up-and-coming bands. Foreign bands and musicians include Yasiin Bey.

Where: Olympic Rowing-Canoeing Park, band of Chaobai River, Bei Xiaoying Zhen, Shunyi District

When: Until May 1, 1-10:30 pm

Admission: 100 yuan for one day, 240 yuan for three days

Tel: 4006 103 721



Sun, Apr. 29



Strawberry Music Festival

About 50 foreign artists will converge for this year's Strawberry Festival, the most ever in the history of this festival.

Where: Canal Park, Dongguan Daqiao Dong, Tongzhou District

When: Until May 1, 1:30-9:30 pm

Admission: 100 yuan for one day, 240 yuan for three days

Tel: 4006 103 721

Mon, Apr. 30

Salon

Little Life in Big City

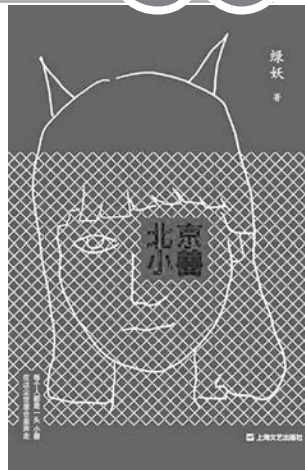
The writer of *The Monster in Beijing*, Li Yao, will attend this salon. He will be joined by screenwriter Shi Hang and writer Sang Gege. They will exchange stories about love and life in Beijing.

Where: Danxiang Jie, Left RS-16 of Building 11, Lanse Gangwan, 6 Chaoyang Gongyuan Lu, Chaoyang District

When: 3 pm

Admission: Free

Tel: 5905 6973



Wed, May 2

Concert

A piano solo by Li Yundi

Li Yundi is one of the most popular pianists in China – and around the world. He has released 11 albums, and is often invited to give shows in foreign countries.

Where: The National Grand Theater, 2 Xi Changan Jie, Xicheng District

When: 7:30 pm

Admission: 200-880 yuan

Tel: 6655 0242



Tue, May 1

Ballet

Swan Lake

The National Ballet of Cuba is one of the most famous dance groups in the world, and occupies an important position in Latin American contemporary art. It inherits hundreds of years of history and reflects the national cultural heritage of Cuba.

Where: The National Grand Theater, 2 Xi Changan Jie, Xicheng District

When: 7:30 pm

Admission: 180-800 yuan

Tel: 6655 0242



Thu, May 3



Movie

How to Train Your Dragon

This animated movie, directed and written by Dean DeBlois and Chris Sanders, was nominated for Best Animated Feature Film and Best Music at the 2011 Academy Awards.

Where: Story Coffee, Building D, Huayuan Enterprise Center, 9 Beizhan Bei Jie, Xicheng District

When: 7 pm

Admission: Free

Tel: 8832 0741

(By Liu Xiaochen)

Shaoxing

a city steeped in history

By Huang Daohen

To understand China, you must know its history. In metropolises like Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou, that history has been paved over by highways and replaced with skyscrapers.

For history, you have to go into the countryside – to places like the northern part of Zhejiang Province, south of Hangzhou Bay, where you'll find Shaoxing, a place awash with history, culture and nature.



Shaoxing showcases the country's ancient history and culture.
IC/CFP Photos

A one-day tour of Shaoxing is usually enough for visitors, even first-timers. The tour starts at Lu Xun's (1881-1936) Former Residence, the city's No. 1 draw – it attracts droves of tourists who wish to pay tribute to one of the country's best-known writers and poets.

Lu, a local hero, is considered one of the leading intellectuals of the May Fourth Movement and one of the greatest modern writers.

Located in the center of Shaoxing, his former residence – not just a house, but a neighborhood – has been restored to its original condition. It consists of places that have appeared in Lu's writings, including Xianheng Restaurant, the setting for his short story "Kong Yiji."

To the east is Sanweishuwu, or Three Flavor Study, the private school Lu attended as a child. Parallel to the house is a small canal, from which visitors can view the residence aboard little wooden boats called *wupeng*.

The site charges no admission.

The next stop is Shen Yuan, built as a private garden during the Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279). It was rediscovered and romanticized when it was featured in a tragic love story between the poet Lu You (1125-1210) and his lover Tang Wan.

The couple adored each other, but had to separate to conform to their family's wishes. Years later, the two met in the garden and Lu wrote a heartbreakingly sad poem for his beloved.

In the garden is a stone memorial on which words from Lu's poem are engraved.

Another must-see in Shaoxing is Lanting, the Orchid Pavilion, associated with Wang Xizhi (321-379), a renowned calligrapher from the Eastern Jin Dynasty (318-420).

Located at the foot of Orchid Hill, the park is considered sacred by both Chinese and foreign calligraphers. It costs 40 yuan to get in.

Throughout the site is visitor information in Chinese and English. There are several booths in which visitors can watch calligraphers at work and purchase calligraphic pieces. On the way to the exit is a scenic village that sells more souvenirs.

After a full day of visiting historical sites, a canal ride is the best way to cap off the trip.

Spend 50 to hop on one of the small wooden boats for a nighttime float. The boats have black awnings and are paddled by boatmen who work a long oar with their feet. Free tea is offered onboard.



Canal ride

Travel tips

Transportation

Trains run between Shaoxing and Hangzhou, Ningbo and Shanghai every day. Buses from Shaoxing to Shanghai (70 yuan) leave every 30 minutes, while those to Hangzhou (22 yuan) leave every 10 minutes.

Accommodation

The city has a host of hotels to suit different tastes and budgets.

Food

Local food includes freshwater fish, poultry and bean products – all cooked with Shaoxing yellow rice wine. A popular dish is the Shaoxing chicken.



Lu Xun's Former Residence